

To: Thilsted, Eugene[thilsted.eugene@epa.gov]; Nichole Foster (Foster.Nichole@epa.gov)[Foster.Nichole@epa.gov]
From: Weiler, Gregory
Sent: Thur 8/13/2015 6:26:48 PM
Subject: High toxic metal levels after mine spill

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AP News

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Aug 13, 2:21 PM EDT

The Latest: EPA: High toxic metal levels after mine spill



Residents Fear Mine Spill Waste Will Spoil River

Local officials and the Navajo Nation in towns downstream from where millions of gallons of mine waste spilled into a southwest Colorado river are demanding answers about possible threats to the water supply. (Aug. 11)

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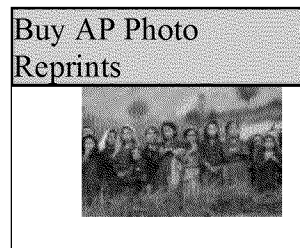
Residents Fear Mine Spill Waste Will Spoil River

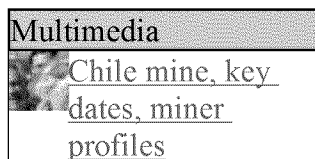
Local officials and the Navajo Nation in towns downstream from where millions of gallons of mine waste spilled into a southwest Colorado river are demanding answers about possible threats to the water supply. (Aug. 11)

AP



AP Photo/Brennan Linsley





DURANGO, Colo. (AP) -- The latest in the Colorado mine spill (all times local):

12:20 p.m.

Sampling results from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency show high levels of toxic heavy metals in river water following last week's spill at a Colorado mine.

The federal agency released its testing data early Thursday following increasing public pressure.

The test results show water samples taken from the Animas River near Silverton, Colorado, in the hours after the spill contained lead levels more than 200 times the acute exposure limit for aquatic life and more than 3,500 times the limit for human ingestion.

The agency stressed that contamination levels peaked after the spill but have since fallen as the pollution moved downstream and the toxic metals settled to the bottom.

EPA and contract workers accidentally unleashed 3 million gallons of contaminated wastewater on Aug. 5 as they inspected the idled Gold King Mine.

12:05 p.m.

The president of the Navajo Nation is advising tribal members not to submit claims for federal reimbursement for the Colorado mine spill.

President Russell Begaye says doing so means Navajos waive any future claim for injuries. Tribal ranchers have had to move their livestock away from the polluted San Juan River, and farmers worry their crops will suffer. Begaye says Navajo elders also might not know what they're signing.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has taken responsibility for its crew accidentally unleashing 3 million gallons of wastewater last week that flowed downstream to New Mexico and Utah. The agency says the form must be submitted within two years of the discovery of the

claim.

Begaye says the EPA has distributed claim forms at public hearings across the Navajo Reserccation and urged tribal members to sign them.

11:17 a.m.

New Mexico's environment secretary is criticizing Colorado's governor for drinking water from the river contaminated by a mine spill.

Gov. John Hickenlooper put an iodine tablet in a bottle of Animas River water to kill bacteria before taking a gulp Tuesday. He was trying to prove the river was back to normal after 3 million gallons of mine waste containing heavy metals was unleashed last week.

The Farmington Daily Times (<http://bit.ly/1KjwIjX>) reports that Secretary Ryan Flynn told residents there Wednesday night that the move was irresponsible and sent a bad message. He said Hickenlooper may as well have lit 15 cigarettes at once.

Hickenlooper, a Democrat, got attention in 2013 after saying he drank a form of fracking fluid to prove it was safe.

Colorado is allowing treatment plants to use river water again, but the Animas remains closed to boating.

8:23 a.m.

The head of the Environmental Protection Agency is visiting Farmington, New Mexico, to see how officials are dealing with the fallout from the Colorado mine waste spill that traveled downstream.

EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy is scheduled to meet with state, local and tribal officials Thursday and address reporters on a trail along the Animas River.

The visit follows her stop upstream in Durango, Colorado, on Wednesday. There, McCarthy said she was heartbroken by the spill and announced that investigation field work would stop at mines nationwide as the agency looks into what led up to last week's disaster.

An EPA-led crew accidentally unleashed 3 million gallons of wastewater containing metals such as arsenic, lead and iron.

Colorado says it's now safe for Durango to process river water into drinking water.

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"Out of the long list of nature's gifts to man, none is perhaps so utterly essential to human life as soil."
Hugh Hammond Bennett